GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3865
ANSWERED ON:09.08.2017
Fishermen killed by Sri Lankan Navy
Ramadoss Dr. Anbumani

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

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(a) whether the Sri Lankan Navy has killed and arrested Indian fishermen and damaged/seized their trawlers (boats), fishing nets, etc.;

(b) if so, the details of the Indian fishermen killed and arrested during the current year; and

(c) whether the Government has taken any steps to find a permanent solution of the above problem of fishermen and if so, the details thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(SHRI M. J. AKBAR)

(a) & (b) According to available reports, a fishing vessel from Tamil Nadu was fired upon in Palk Bay at around 2230 hrs on 6 March 2017, leading to the death of an Indian fisherman named Britjo and injury to another. The Sri Lankan side denied the involvement of their Navy in the firing incident. However, the Government of Sri Lanka has ordered a full investigation. Instances of Indian fishermen apprehended for alleged fishing in Sri Lankan waters have been reported from time to time. So far in 2017, 215 Indian fishermen and 37 fishing vessels have been apprehended by Sri Lankan authorities. With sustained diplomatic efforts, Government could secure the release of 200 fishermen from Sri Lankan custody.

(c) Government has taken up the fishermen issues at the highest level, including by the Prime Minister with the visiting Sri Lankan Prime Minister in April 2017 and with the Sri Lankan President and Prime Minister during his visit to Sri Lanka in May 2017. External Affairs Minister also raised the matter with the visiting Sri Lankan Prime Minister in April 2017 and subsequently with the Sri Lankan Minister of Foreign Affairs during the latter's visit to India in June 2017.

Following our 2+2 initiative in November 2016 when the Foreign and Fisheries Ministers of the two countries met in New Delhi, a bilateral Joint Working Group (JWG) mechanism was institutionalized to address the fishermen issues. It was also agreed that Ministers for Fisheries of the two countries meet every six months to review the progress. So far two rounds of the JWG meeting have been held. The 2nd meeting of the JWG held on 7 April 2017 in Colombo took stock of the implementation of the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) agreed to by both sides pending a permanent solution to the fishermen issues.

Government has taken several measures to encourage our fishermen to diversify into deep-sea fishing using tuna long-liners. An amount of Rupees 200 crore has been allocated by the Government during the current financial year as its share to support the fishermen under the "Assistance for Deep Sea Fishing" scheme. As part of the efforts to rehabilitate the fishermen, training and capacity building programmes commenced in January 2017. Three batches of fishermen from Tamil Nadu have been trained so far in deep-sea fishing, long-lining and onboard handling and processing of fish. Among other initiatives jointly implemented with the State Government of Tamil Nadu, construction of fishing harbours at Kunthukal and Mookaiyur is currently in progress.